SUSAN CROSS
Retrospective
Introduction by Professor Elizabeth Moignard

Susan Cross’ career and exhibition history leads, with admirable directness, from her graduations from Herefordshire College of Art and Design and Middlesex Polytechnic in the early 1980s and her arrival in Scotland in 1989, via shows, solo and as part of a group, in places as far apart as Edinburgh, San Francisco, Kyoto, and Auckland among others, to the award of the Jerwood Prize in 2007, and her Readership at Edinburgh College of Art in 2008. She and her work appear in publications internationally from as early as 1989, and this underpins a continuing history of inspiring teaching, lecturing and professional practice which has been equally busy, and just as international. The work is in a number of public collections, including those of the National Museums of Scotland and the Victoria and Albert Museum; the exhibition and publication history shows a continuing presence among the key indicators of a developing applied art form. And, and this is just as important, it is also out on the clothes and bodies of a large number of appreciative wearers.

Left: Susan Cross in her studio, 2013
Right: Chinese ink drawings and enamel test plates, sketchbooks, 2010 - 2013
Time, therefore, for an overview, and this exhibition at The Scottish Gallery, her fourth solo show here, gives us a fascinating opportunity to see the development of Susan’s work as the persistent learning and discovery process it undoubtedly is, right from the domestic learning process which began with knitting and crochet at home as a child. We are given the opportunity to see the work advance from the early wire-textile forms to the balanced suspension pendants to the experiments with enamel currently in hand, and see how they speak to each other and to us. Some of them demonstrate their maker’s characteristic association of the consistently assured technique, foregrounded in Susan’s Jerwood citation, with courageous experiment, not least in precious metals: the silver and gold sequin and the Ric-Rac neckpieces of 1993 and 2010 show us a sustained expertise and, interestingly, perhaps a hardening aesthetic. The more recent pieces are bolder in form and colour: the Rebel in the Soul and Seacliff neckpieces, combining grey silver embossed oval forms and thread, are sizeable, busy, and noisy in their interaction with the moving wearer. Seacliff began as a necklace made with shells on a beach.

Left: Reference points in the studio, 2013. Photo: Michael Wolchover

Chinese medicine market, Seoul, Korea, 2008
A very evident connecting thread which joins these pieces is the enduring interest in drawing, and specifically in adventures with line, married to an enjoyment of the traditional materials and practices of other cultures, Chinese ink printing on bamboo paper among them. Susan has an active archive of drawings and workbooks which demonstrate a deeply embedded practice: she draws to think and to explore and play as well as to record, and her three-dimensional work carries that forward in her use of wire, thread, and fabric-reminiscent textures, particularly in the more recent work, and even in the enamel pieces, which are clearly going to develop further. The fascination with linear shapes and constructions has a natural connection with the lifelong use of the handworked thread and textile idioms which appear and reappear in Susan’s working patterns, and are refreshed by travel and research abroad, not least in Korea, which provided some of the traditional thread elements in the mixed-medium works. The extraordinary oxidised silver wire panel-constructed gloves of 1988 do lead to the metal and cotton combinations and the crossed thread patterns in the enamel, via the wire-wrapped tubes of the Jerwood period.

With the lines and threads goes a sense of connection, of complex interwoven forms, and of the interaction of shapes and colours: the Concentration brooches coil paper cord and flash loose red cotton threads; the series of Twist, Loop and Tangle brooches in gold and oxidised silver lead the eye around their twisted and coiled of flattened pearl-wire; a transparent square wire cushion includes more of the gold sequins in its entanglements. The Enclosure brooch of 2009 perhaps draws this all together in its use of ric-rac wire which encloses a coiled pink thread lining. The sense of containment and security is strong: the garment to which it is pinned, and ultimately its wearer, form the base of the oxidised silver nest – it is both enclosed and transparent, and we might see this as an enduring characteristic of Susan’s work: the wearer, a consistent priority from the start, often, and by intention, adds an extra dimension to an object which already has a powerful presence rooted in the quality and innovation of its design and fabrication and the appeal of its colours and texture.

Elizabeth Moignard, 2013
Oxidised silver gloves, 1988
Earrings, 1993
platinum & 18ct yellow gold, 3.2 x 2.5 cms

Earrings, 1998
18ct white & 18ct yellow gold, 2.5 x 1 cms
Earrings, 1993, platinum and 18ct gold, 5.5 x 1.5 cms
Sequin Necklace, 1997, silver & 18ct gold, length 47.5cms
(includes bespoke American black walnut case)
Left: Earrings, 1998, 18ct gold, 1.7 x 1 cms
Right: Earrings, 1998, 18ct gold, 4.2 cms
Necklace, 1998/2013, oxidised silver, 18ct gold
length 53 cms
Left: Earrings, 1998, 18ct gold, length 6 cms
Right: Earrings, 1998, 18ct white and yellow gold, length 6 cms
Left: Brooch, 2000, oxidised silver, 3 x 3 cms
Right: Studs, 1995, oxidised silver, 18ct gold, 1.6 x 1.1 cms
Reversible Brooch, 1999, oxidised silver, 18ct gold
4.5 x 1.5 cms
Earrings, 2013, oxidised silver & gold, 4 x 1.8 cms
Earrings, 1992, silver and gold 2.7 x 1 cms
Ric Rac Necklace, 2010, oxidised silver, 29 x 22 x 2 cms
Two Hoops, neckpiece, 2009, oxidised silver, 18ct gold, 27.5 x 11.5 cms
Photograph: John McGregor
Pendant, 2008, oxidised silver, 18ct gold, 63 x 10 cms
Left: Earrings, 1999, oxidised silver, 18ct gold, length 6.5cms
Right: Earrings, 1999, 18ct gold, oxidised silver, length 6.5cms
Moving from the Centre III, pendant, 2001, oxidised silver, 18ct gold, 55 x 7.3 cms
Part of a series of three; one of which is in the permanent collection of National Museums Scotland
Equilibrium I, pendant, 2001, oxidised silver, 18ct gold
length 54.5 cms
Equilibrium II, pendant, 2001 oxidised silver, 18ct gold
length 47.5 cms
Bound bead necklace, 2008, 18ct gold, oxidised silver
15.5 x 15 cms
Precisions I, neckpiece, 2001, 22ct gold striped with 18ct gold, oxidised silver
52 x 10 cms
Precisions II, neckpiece, 2001, oxidised silver, 18ct gold
53 x 10 cms
Centering II, neckpiece, 2001, oxidised silver and 18ct gold, 33 x 11 cms
Jade Pendant, 2000, 18ct gold, oxidised silver
length 61.5 cms
Picasso Jasper Pendant, 2000, oxidised silver, 18ct gold, length 61.5 cms
Alhambra Series Brooches, 2001
22ct gold plate on brass
Left: 5.5 x 9.2 cms
Right: 8.3 x 8.3 cms
Alhambra Series Brooch, 2001, 22ct gold plate on brass, 12.2 x 8 cms
Woven chain necklace, 2005, oxidised silver & textile
length 39 cms
Enclosure, brooch, 2009
oxidised silver and thread, 7.5 x 6.5 x 2.2 cms
Photo: John McGregor
Very long necklace, 2009, oxidised silver, 18ct gold
length 82.5 cms
Made for ‘Creation II’ exhibition at the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths’
Looping the Loop series brooch, 2008
oxidised silver, 18ct gold,
11 x 4.5 cms
Looping the Loop series brooch, 2004
oxidised silver, 18ct gold
7.5 x 7.5 cms
Looping the Loop series brooch, 2004
oxidised silver, 18ct gold,
6.5 x 7.5 cms
Looping the Loop series brooch, 2004
oxidised silver, 18ct gold
8.5 x 8.5 cms
Looping the Loop series brooch, 2003
oxidised silver, linen
7 x 8.5 x 2 cms
Looping the Loop series brooch, 2004
oxidised silver, textile
8.5 x 7.5 x 0.5 cms
Poppy Brooch, 2009
oxidised silver
4.2 x 4.2 cms
Poppy Brooch, 2009
oxidised silver, textile
5 x 5 cms
Concentration, 2001
Brooch, spun paper cord and thread
7.5 x 7.5 cms
Concentration, 2001
Brooch, spun paper cord and thread
7.5 x 7.5 cms
Seacliff (shells) Necklace, 2010
oxidised silver, korean braid
length 52 cms
Seacliff (shells) Necklace, 2010
oxidised silver, korean braid
length 52 cms
Rebel in the Soul, 2010
neckpiece, oxidised silver and Korean braid, 80 l x 9 w cms
Left: Ring, 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct gold, 4.1 x 3.5 cms
Right: Ring, 2013, silver, 18ct gold, 3.1 x 2.7 cms
Left: Ring, 2013, silver, 18ct gold, 2.7 x 2.4 cms
Right: Ring, 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct gold, 3.3 x 3.3 cms
Top Row:
(left) Clip Earrings, 2013, oxidised silver, 2.5 x 2.7 cms
(right) Earrings, 2012, oxidised silver, 22ct gold, 2.9 x 2.6 cms

Bottom Row:
(left) Earrings, 2013, silver, 18ct gold, 2.2 x 2 cms
(right) Earrings, 2012, oxidised silver, 2.6 x 2.4 cms
Top Row:
(left) Earrings, 2012, oxidised silver, 22ct gold, 3.5 x 3.5 cms
(right) Earrings, 2012, oxidised silver, 22ct gold, 2.1 x 2.1 cms

Bottom Row:
(left) Earrings, 2012, silver, 22ct gold, 2.6 x 2.9 cms
(right) Earrings, 2012, oxidised silver, 2.8 x 2.5 cms
Top Row:
(left) Earrings, 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct green gold, 2.1 x 2.1 cms
(right) Earrings, 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct green gold, 2.5 x 2.8 cms
Bottom row: Earrings, 2013, oxidised silver, 22ct gold, 2.1 x 2.1 cms
Top: Earrings, 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct green gold, 2.5 x 2.8 cms
Middle: Earrings, 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct green gold, 3.5 x 3.5 cms
Bottom: Ear clips, 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct green gold, 2.5 x 2.7 cms
Bundles, pendant 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct green gold, 60 cm l, pendant 9 x 8 cms
Left: Ring, 2013, oxidised silver, 22ct gold, 4 x 4.5 cms
Right: Ring, 2013, oxidised silver, 18ct green gold, 3.5 x 3.5 cms
In 2010 I was invited by Elizabeth Turrell (senior research fellow) to visit the Enamel Research Studio, then at the University of West of England in Bristol. A timely opportunity as I had a growing collection of collages and drawings that were proving difficult to translate with the techniques that I was familiar with. A new way forward was required.

This introduction to vitreous enamel and in particular the technique of sgraffito (meaning scratched in Italian) is for me a natural extension of mark making. The repeatable process of layering on opaque liquid enamel, scribing through, firing and the careful removal by abrasion, offers both the sensitivity of application and visual subtleties achieved with paint, pen or graphite and more recently the dispersal of ink on bamboo paper with water.

A particularly interesting development has been the use of photographic transfer, in this case Korean text. Fired onto the enamel surface this flat but textural surface is then embedded under layers of enamel, revealed only by a series of fine incised lines. This direct translation from drawing to making has opened up a new and refreshing vocabulary to explore and develop.

Susan Cross
August 2013
Brooch, 2010
steel, enamel, oxidised silver, korean braid
5.5 x 4cms
Brooch, 2010
steel, enamel, oxidised silver, korean braid
7 x 4 cms
Loops and Lines, pendant, 2010
steel, enamel, oxidised silver, korean braid
length 57.5 cms
Brooch, 2010
steel, enamel, oxidised silver, korean braid
7.5 x 4.8 cms
Brooch, 2010
steel, enamel, oxidised silver, korean braid
7.5 x 5.5 cms
Heart and Soul, pendant, 2010
steel, enamel, oxidised silver, korean braid
length 58 cms
Compostition, white on orange II
brooch, 2011, steel, enamel, oxidised silver,
korean braid, ebony
5.4 x 6 cms
Composition with Korean text II
brooch, 2011
steel, enamel, oxidised silver,
korean braid, ebony
7 x 6.2 cms
Knots and Dots, pendant, 2010
steel, enamel, oxidised silver, korean braid
length 60 cms
Top: Composition III, Korean text with gold centre, 2013
enamel, oxidised silver, steel, 5.3 x 5.3 cms

Middle: Composition V, white over orange, 2013
enamel, oxidised silver, steel, 5 x 4.5 cms

Bottom: Compostition IV, orange smudge, 2013
enamel, oxidised silver, steel, 5.3 x 5.3 cms
Susan Cross has lived and worked in Edinburgh since 1989. One of her recent notable accolades was to be short listed for the prestigious Jerwood Applied Arts Award for Jewellery in 2007. Susan lectures at Edinburgh College of Art.

“A breadth of interests and ideas continues to fuel and underpin the development of the jewellery that I make. Each work is carefully composed and every phase is intensely considered. Drawing is an integral part of this creative process; a thoughtful and responsive activity thus ensuring freshness and spontaneity. The complete integration with my life imbues my work with a depth and authenticity belied by its apparent simplicity.

As a jeweller, I aim to explore the sensuality of the body through the tactility of the materials. My work enables me to communicate an aspect of myself to those who choose to wear it, articulating my creative energy, allowing the wearer to interpret it an individual level.” Susan Cross, July 2013

Public collections include:
Victoria & Albert Museum, London
National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh
Crafts Council, London
Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London
Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

Susan Cross in her studio, 2013. Photo: Michael Wolchover
Susan Cross Biography

1964  Born Herefordshire
1980 – 1982  Herefordshire College of Art & Design
            Diploma in General Art & Design
1982 – 1986  Middlesex Polytechnic
            BA (Hons) Jewellery

Major selected exhibitions since 2001
2011/12  Drawing, Permanence & Place, European & UK touring
2010    Drawing with Objects, Contemporary applied Arts, London
2009 /10 Collect, Saatchi Galleries, London represented by Electrum Gallery
2008    Collect, V&A. represented by The Scottish Gallery
        Process Works, London Metropolitan University
2005    Interface, The Scottish Gallery & Ruthin Crafts Centre, N. Wales
2001    100% Proof, a distillation of new work in Jewellery & Silversmithing
        from Scotland. UK & USA
        Susan Cross - New Work, solo show. Scottish gallery, Edinburgh

Chinese ink drawings and enamel test plates
Susan Cross, 2010 - 2013
Selected Academic Posts
2008-11      External Examiner, London Metropolitan University
1989 - Present   Lecturer - Edinburgh College of Art

Selected Awards
2008      Honorary Fellow, Hereford College of Arts
           Appointed Reader, Edinburgh College of Art
2007     Jerwood  Applied Arts Award, Jewellery
2001     Inches Carr Trust Bursary
1999     Scottish Arts Council travel grant to visit Japan

All photography by William Van Esland unless stated otherwise.

* Pieces are not hallmarked. Please note that the majority of the pieces come under the exemption weight for hallmarking.
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